

## Plan 'threat' to greenbelt

SWATHES of idyllic greenbelt land on the outskirts of Maidenhead could be under threat from a Government development plan for the South East.

Discussing the Government's draft document at Thursday's cabinet meeting, Royal Borough councillors raised concerns that the plan could lead to greenbelt land being concreted over to make way for housing. The report states that 346 new dwellings must be built in the Royal Borough every year until 2031. This equates to 8,651 new houses in that time and that is the government's minimum expectation.

It is feared this scale of urbanisation could force the Royal Borough's hand into considering planning applications on greenbelt land or nearby small villages, in order to hit central government targets.

The council's strategic planning unit noted the draft plans from the Government but said its housing provision figures were illogical.

"On one hand the Government is saying they want to protect greenbelt land but on the other they are forcing us to release it," said Cllr Alison Knight, cabinet member for planning.

"The Local Development Framework Working Group now has to decide how we go about building these new dwellings."

■ Conservatives on the Royal Borough announced last week they were looking to add new land to the greenbelt.

Cllr Knight (Conservative Sunninghill and South Ascot) asked council staff to assess possible sites across the borough which might fit the criteria for inclusion as greenbelt.

In the face of pressure from central government to build new homes, Cllr Knight said: "We pledged to protect the greenbelt and I hope we have found a way of doing just that."

Cllr David Burbage, leader of the council said: "We face intense pressure from the Government to assess – and even release – greenbelt for future development, but we are committed to protecting it."

"We are not making any secret plans to build – the government has concluded that we must build 8,650 homes by 2031 – an incredible amount of tarmac and concrete in our beautiful green borough."

## Backing from MP

EFFORTS to raise awareness of mental health issues by the Berkshire Healthcare Foundation (BHFT) are being backed by Maidenhead MP Theresa May.

To coincide with World Mental Health Day tomorrow (Friday) BHFT is launching a new website and is hosting information stands across the county, including in Maidenhead.

Mrs May said: "As many as one in four people will experience mental health problems at some point in their life yet there is still more to be done to raise awareness of these important issues."

"I fully support BHFT's work to promote knowledge of mental health issues and increase our understanding of them."

# Gutsy walkers get wet wet



**SINGIN' IN THE RAIN:** Young walkers from Highfield School remain cheerful despite the awful weather. Photo: James Brown



**MAPPING THE ROUTE:** Boundary walkers Marilyn Foster, Trudy Coles, and Corinne Coles, 17, are undaunted by the distance. Ref:100358-4



**A BRIDGE TOO FAR?** Determined walkers ignored persistent drizzle on the Maidenhead Boundary Walk. Ref:100358-26

## Trekkers brave heavy showers

By Daniel Darlington  
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A HARDY bunch of rain-swept walkers braved torrential showers to take part in the annual Maidenhead Boundary Walk on Sunday morning.

Having set their alarm clocks for the crack of dawn, a total of 439 walkers donned brightly coloured waterproofs to ward off the persistent drizzle.

The walk is based on the tradition of 'beating the bounds', when the mayor would lead a group of residents around the boundary of the old Maidenhead borough, marked by a series of numbered stones – many of which still exist.

Mingling in Boulton's Lock car park at 9am, walkers patiently waited for the Mayor of Windsor and

Maidenhead, Cllr Dorothy Kemp, to get them under way before trundling off down towards Maidenhead Bridge and the start of their 13-mile trek.

The event is organised every year by the Rotary Club of Maidenhead and dates back to 1982.

Since its inception an estimated £500,000 has been raised for charity by more than 10,000 walkers.

About 50 members of Rotary helped out on the dour and gloomy day, selling raffle tickets, or standing under umbrellas guiding windswept walkers around the course.

Along the route refreshment sites provided soft drinks and energy-boosting chocolate bars, as runners and walkers steeled themselves in a bid to make it all the way round.



**READY FOR ACTION:** Walkers congregate in Boulton's Lock car park before setting off on the 13-mile boundary trek. Ref:100358-8



**MARCHING ORDERS:** Maidenhead Air Cadets Matt Cox, 16, and Rob Hallissey, 16, take on the Boundary walk. Ref:100358-1



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# wet to beat the bounds and the rain



## on 13-mile boundary route

Among the early walkers was Maidenhead MP Theresa May and her husband Philip, who completed half of the boundary walk a few years ago in sunnier conditions.

"I think it is the first time we have had weather like this and it is a great pity," she said.

"The ironic thing is that I think it's blue skies for the Great North Run in Newcastle but wet here.

"But it is fantastic that so many people have still come out.

"There is the historical element to this walk but it is particularly good to see so many people raising sponsorship for such important charities."

Waterproofs were certainly the order of the day, but 16-year-old Robert Hallissey looked smarter

than most, dressed for the occasion in his Maidenhead Air Cadets uniform.

He said: "We are going to march the course wearing these heavy back packs, and are raising money for the Royal Air Force Association (RAFA)."

Chief organiser of the event for the Rotary Club of Maidenhead, Ramesh Kapur told the Advertiser: "It is a healthy thing for people to do and I think it's great that people are also doing a good deed.

"It is always fun whatever the weather. There is a great spirit and people are raising money for many good causes."

Despite the weather the turnout for the walk was much higher than in recent years and the event raised more than £18,000 for charitable causes.



**GRAND DAY OUT:** Wearing an assortment of rain macs, walkers set out on the Maidenhead Boundary Walk. Ref:100358-16



**WRAPPED UP WARM:** Veronica Freeman, Julia Freeman, nine, and Laura Freeman, 11, are ready for the rainy conditions. Ref:100358-19



**BROLLY GOOD SHOW:** An early start for boundary walkers Yvonne Meade and Maxine Carpenter. Ref:100358-6



**READY FOR MORE:** Amelia Brown, seven, from Highfield School, completed the boundary walk in six hours 55 minutes. "I could have carried on," she said. Photo: James Brown

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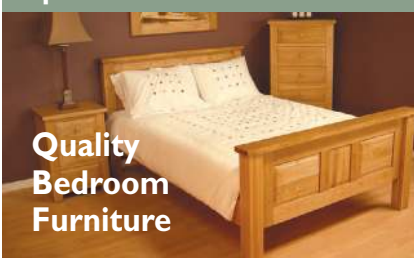
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